# Selected Writing Samples

Joshua Repp

**In the "Euchre Belt," a Declining National Pastime Is Still Dealing**
*Midstory, 9.8.25.*
https://www.midstory.org/in-the-euchre-belt-a-declining-national-pastime-is-still-dealing/

**Historic Wind Turbines Come Down Near Campus, Make Way for Bigger Project**
*The Colgate Maroon-News, 10.10.25*
https://thecolgatemaroonnews.com/63574/news/whats-next-after-demolition-of-first-new-york-wind-farm/

**Ohio State or Michigan? In College Football's Biggest Rivalry, the Toledo War Rages On**
*Midstory, 11.5.25. Interviews: Janek Schaller.*
https://www.midstory.org/ohio-state-or-michigan-in-college-footballs-biggest-rivalry-the-toledo-war-rages-on/

**Música de Maestros' Residency Brings a Fresh Look at Music Performance**
*The Colgate Maroon-News, 10.4.24*
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**In the “Euchre Belt,” a Declining National Pastime Is Still Dealing**

*Midstory, 9.8.25.*

In May 2025, the World Euchre Tournament brought over 600 people to New Glarus, Wisconsin. But if you’re not from the region known as the “Euchre Belt” — Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky or Pennsylvania — you might not get the appeal.

Enter Monrovia, Indiana, an agricultural town of less than 2,000 inhabitants. Its downtown is little more than a sparse main street, but every third Saturday of the month at 6 p.m., the Monrovia Festival and Community Association brings together a loyal band of euchre players.

“A lot of these people that play, they play five, six days a week,” Bill Chapple, president of the association, said. “You’d laugh — they know the routine. They know where every game is. They know where they’re going the next day and everything. It’s like a traveling circus with them, and it gives them something to do.”

Players range from the laid-back to the hyper-competitive, but most are simply people who have known and enjoyed the game for their entire lives.

“You get daughters and kids from members that have passed away, so it kind of starts as a family tradition in a lot of places,” Chapple said. “As a kid, I was taught how to play — a lot of kids are [dragged] into it because there’s three people and they need a fourth, so they teach them to play.”

The game might sound like little more than a small-town tradition, but in 1862, Charles Henry Wharton described it as the “most

entertaining and fascinating of all the games of cards yet invented.”

When Wharton’s book on the game’s rules was published in 1862, euchre enjoyed widespread popularity in the States. And in an 1864 handbook of games, euchre was definitively the “favorite American game.

Based on historic and linguistic evidence, euchre is believed to have an origin in the Alsatian and Southwest German game of Jucker.

Euchre reached America via a wave of German immigrants, over 500,000 of whom made the journey between 1815 and 1848. The U.S. represented a place of great promise for the immigrants, who were mostly small farmers or craftsmen, and they largely settled throughout the Great Lakes region.

*FULL STORY:*
*https://www.midstory.org/in-the-euchre-belt-a-declining-national-pastime-is-still-dealing/*

**Historic Wind Turbines Come Down Near Campus, Make Way for Bigger Project**

*The Colgate Maroon-News, 10.10.25.*

A piece of New York state's renewable energy history disappeared on Wednesday, Sept. 17, when the state's first commercial wind farm was demolished just miles from Colgate University, raising questions about how the Central New York region will meet ambitious climate goals set by state law. Seven turbines at the Madison Wind Farm in Madison, N.Y. came down in controlled explosions last month, though a larger replacement project is already in development.

The turbines were blown up in about half a minute as controlled blasts were fired. Twenty-five years ago, these historic windmills made up the first commercial wind farm in the state. Royce Cook was involved in the demolition project and spoke with CNYCentral about the demolition method.

"It's more cost-efficient by blowing the bases and having them tip over versus bringing in a top-off crane and building roadways and cubage because it is heavy equipment," Cook said.

It was a timely end to the project, which was estimated to have an operational lifespan of 20 to 25 years. Madison Wind Farm's owner and operator, EDP Global, issued a press release discussing the rationale behind its demolition.

"As of 2025, the project has come to the end of that lifespan and is no longer considered economically viable, primarily due to the current turbines being out of production, making repairs and obtaining replacement parts increasingly difficult and costly," the EDP statement said.

Wind energy production in the U.S. has come a long way since 2000. In 2024, the net generation of wind energy in the U.S. was 453,454 gigawatt-hours (GWh) compared to 6,737 GWh in 2001. And the production has grown tremendously in New York as well, with a growth from just 21 GWh in 2001 to 5,991 GWh across all sectors in 2024.

Madison Wind Farm was built at the beginning of a period in which increasing attention was given to wind energy in the U.S. After a period of low energy supplies in the 1990s, increasing costs after the turn of the century led to an increase in focus on whether the U.S. is dependent on foreign nations for its energy. As the U.S. developed renewable energy policy targets and innovation decreased implementation costs, wind energy was among the renewable energy sources that started to become more appealing.

*FULL STORY:*
*https://thecolgatemaroonnews.com/63574/news/whats-next-after-demolition-of-first-new-york-wind-farm/*

**Ohio State or Michigan? In College Football's Biggest Rivalry, the Toledo War Rages On**

*Midstory, 11.5.25. Interviews: Janek Schaller.*

Jeremy Miller's first taste of the rivalry between The Ohio State University and the University of Michigan came while boarding the school bus in elementary school. Confronted by a horde of rowdy second graders, he was forced to make a choice: Was he an Ohio State or Michigan fan?

"I had to pick a side that day, and I chose Ohio State, because … we live in Ohio," Miller said.

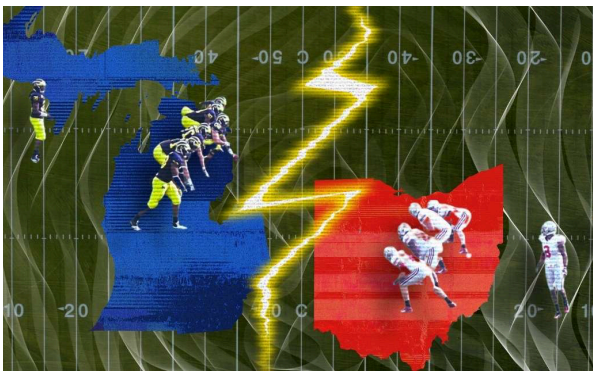
"As the bus starts picking up more kids, it starts getting a little bit more rowdy, both sides yelling at each other, 'Ohio State,' 'Go Blue,' 'Ohio State,' 'Go Blue.'"

Jack Mewhort remembers the same pressure.

"Growing up in Toledo, Ohio, the rivalry was a big deal, kind of a split town as far as the game goes," Mehort said. "I remember going to school when I was younger, and it was like a holiday: Ohio State-Michigan day, kids would wear their jerseys, and it was just a big day."

But Mewhort remembers gravitating more toward Michigan's blue and maize than Ohio's scarlet and gray.

Both boys grew up in Northwest Ohio, and both would end up attending St. John's Jesuit High School in Toledo. But in defiance of their younger selves' leanings, Miller would go on to become long snapper for the Wolverines from 1997-2001, and Mewhort the offensive tackle for the Buckeyes from 2009-2013.



But perhaps the side-swap shouldn't be so surprising, given that the Ohio State-Michigan conflict has deep roots in Northwest Ohio.

The century-long rivalry, sometimes simply referred to as "The Game" by commentators, was especially salient for Miller as he grew up in the boondocks of Fulton County, Ohio.The county's northern border marks the Ohio-Michigan state line, and before 1836, it made up part of the Toledo Strip, a narrow, 468-square-mile tract of land that stretched from the shore of Lake Erie to the border with Indiana. Both Ohio and Michigan laid claim to the territory due to conflicting geographical legislation.

The dispute culminated in the Toledo War (or perhaps more accurately, the Toledo "War").

*FULL STORY:*
*https://www.midstory.org/ohio-state-or-michigan-in-college-footballs-biggest-rivalry-the-toledo-war-rages-on/*

**Música de Maestros' Residency Brings a Fresh Look at Music Performance**

*The Colgate Maroon-News, 10.4.24*

Michelle Bigenho, Charles A. Dana professor of anthropology and Africana & Latin American studies, first crossed paths with Rolando Encinas in 1993 in Bolivia while conducting her doctoral research. A classically trained musician, Bigenho joined Encinas' Bolivian orchestra, Música de Maestros, when they were in need of a violinist. Over the years, she has returned to Bolivia each summer to play with the ensemble.

On Sept. 27, the Africana & Latin American Studies (ALST) department at Colgate University hosted a Bolivian music concert that marked the culmination of the residency of musicians from Música de Maestros. Students joined the Bolivian musicians, who had taught students the art of playing traditional Bolivian Indigenous panpipes and flutes. The concert was particularly significant as it followed a four-year pause due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Every time I go it's new repertoire, which is great, a wonderful challenge," Bigenho said. "[Encinas] is a master teacher of music, as well as being an amazing musician himself. […] I had come into music through classical training, and so I came with that training, but I definitely learned so much more about being a musician from him than I had learned in all my years of classical music training."

The course, ALST 204 "Performing Bolivian Music," was taught jointly by Bigenho and Encinas with other Música de Maestros musicians, but it diverged from typical music courses. Only about half of the students had a

musical background, but the course focused on absorbing knowledge and experience from the instructors rather than emphasizing classical music skills such as sight reading. The course drew a wide range of students, from those interested in ALST to sociology, and was run bilingually in Spanish and English, as Bigenho translated.

"It's a different kind of teaching. It is about memory and repetition and ear listening; listening carefully and trying to memorize a tune," Bigenho said. "So for me, it's also a very different kind of course to teach because most of the courses I teach are very much focused on texts and writing and thinking analytically. This course taps into a whole other side of ways of learning that I think is incredibly special for the students."

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**In Swanton, Ohio, Farm-Raised Bison are Restoring Local Grasslands**
*Midstory, 6.11.25.*

A herd of bison roams a 55-acre pasture in Swanton, Ohio. It's a sight far removed from the outlook a century ago, when the species was nearly hunted to extinction. Stacy and Brent Nofziger at Bracy Gold Bison Ranch have helped to bring America's largest mammal back from the brink and restore its status as a crucial component of the local environment.

"My husband and I started the ranch together; it was a family dream," Stacy Nofziger said. "When we met and first got married, we lived in Holland, Ohio, and after we got married, we decided that we wanted to get into the agricultural field and raise a healthy meat."

Brent grew up raising livestock and crop farming, and Stacy has a background in zoology from working with large animals at several zoos. Their experience led the couple to move forward on their dream of raising animals. The ranch was established in 2018, and is now home to 35 bison, whose meat is sold to the community.

"[Brent] had a farming background, so he really wanted to get back into it because he became an accountant," Stacy Nofziger said. "He wanted something that was a little bit less hands-on than cattle, and bison, because they're native to North America and haven't been domesticated for that long, are very self-sustaining."

The American bison was once the most abundant hoofed animal on the continent. Prior to European colonization, the bison population was estimated to be as high as 75

million. While they roamed in almost every state, most lived in the prairies east of the Rocky Mountains.

Bison behaviors helped shape the prairie: When lying down, their substantial body weight creates temporary depressions that support diverse plant life, and their grazing patterns result in differing grass heights, benefiting a variety of grassland birds and other wildlife. Even as they decompose, their bodies enrich the soil and serve as a major protein source for predators and scavengers.

But these impacts were missing from America's grasslands for much of the 19th century, when settlers began aggressively hunting bison along and to the east of the Mississippi River for their hides, using New Orleans as a shipping point.

*FULL STORY:*
*https://www.midstory.org/in-swanton-ohio-farm-raised-bison-are-restoring-local-grasslands/*